

EQUAL LAND RIGHTS

The article by Susanne Ainger concerning research by Noel Pearson raises interesting questions (*June Gazette*). Do all humans have land rights? Don't we all have to live on the earth? And don't . . . therefore have to share it? How do we determine how much land rights each has, whether ethically or by law? Do land rights depend on where our ancestors lived, and whether they lived there for a few generations, or 40,000 years? Have not everyone's ancestors lived equally long on the earth?

Of course we are now dealing with legal rights, issued as titles (Torrens, or whatever), which give some people permanent, hereditary (and transferable) privilege of holding parts of Australia, to the necessary exclusion of everyone else.

A small proportion of families hold a huge amount of the value of Australia (city and country, residential and industrial), while some 30 per cent of families own no land, and some 50 per cent hold only a trivial amount in the form of a small home site on strata title. In other words 80 per cent are disadvantaged.

The issue of a land title gives a continuing government-maintained advantage at the expense of the community. The value of such privilege is shown by the price of sites.

The maldistribution of land privilege is the greatest cause of disadvantage, distress, poverty, unemployment and recession. The disadvantaged (a majority of us) have to pay the privileged for permission to live on earth.

When our governments 'welcome' immigrants to Australia, do we offer to share 'our' land with them? Surely land rights do not depend on our genes, or how long we live anywhere.

It would be absurd to seek to redistribute land equally, and that is quite unnecessary. All that is required is to gradually increase taxation on all site values without exemption, exception, differentiation or threshold.

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